











ST. GAUDENS' STATUE OF LINCOLN, IN LINCOLN PARK, CHICAGO.

*Frontispiece.*

# Abraham Lincoln: His Story

BY

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, Jr.

AUTHOR OF "BRAVE DEEDS OF UNION SOLDIERS," ETC.

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*ARMY AND NAVY EDITION*

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To My Wife  
**KATHARINE TRUMBULL SCOVILLE**



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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THE author takes this opportunity of expressing his obligation to Dr. Talcott Williams, head of the Department of Journalism of Columbia University, for access to his scrapbook of Lincolniana, covering a period of many years. For the facts and in some cases for the phrasing of parts of this sketch the author is indebted to the host of unknown writers included in Dr. Williams' collection.

The author has also consulted and made use of the following works: *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, by John G. Nicolay and John Hay; *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, by Ida M. Tarbell; *Abraham Lincoln—The Boy and the Man*, by James Morgan; *Abraham Lincoln the Christian*, by Rev. William J. Johnson; *Lincoln the Lawyer*, by Frederick T. Hill; *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, by J. G. Holland; and *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay. Wherever possible the writer has allowed Lincoln to speak for himself.

SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

Philadelphia, March, 1918.



## FOREWORD

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MORE than half a century ago the feet of this nation had slipped to the very brink of the pit and were scorched with fire. Then came the Man. Still his words ring down the years a message to us who are today giving of our best for the freedom of the world:

“This conflict will settle the question, at least for centuries to come, whether man is capable of governing himself, and consequently is of greater importance to the free than to the slaves.”

· · · · ·

“We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth.”

· · · · ·

“Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”



## CONTENTS

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE BOY.....	13
II. THE MAN.....	21
III. THE LAWYER.....	33
IV. THE SPEAKER.....	45
V. THE STATESMAN.....	54
VI. THE CHRISTIAN.....	65



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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St. GAUDENS' STATUE OF LINCOLN.....	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
BIRTHPLACE AND WHITE HOUSE.....	FACING PAGE 16
LINCOLN IN EARLY MANHOOD.....	38
BARNARD'S STATUE OF LINCOLN.....	46
LINCOLN AND McCLELLAN AT ANTIETAM.....	58
LINCOLN AND HIS SON "TAD".....	66



# ABRAHAM LINCOLN: HIS STORY

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BOY

IN every century are born men whose lives bring messages of help and hope to those who come after. Such an one was Abraham Lincoln. The year of his birth, 1809, was a lion-year. Charles Darwin was born the same day; Mendelssohn, Edgar Allan Poe, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Alfred Tennyson, and William Ewart Gladstone in the same year. Few boys of today start life so handicapped by hardships or with fewer opportunities. Lincoln knew little about his ancestors. In later life he said that he was more concerned to know what his grandfather's grandson would be than who his grandfather had been.

One of his grandfathers was named Abraham Lincoln, and went as a pioneer to Kentucky—then the “Dark and Bloody Ground” claimed and guarded by fierce Indian tribes. There, near where the city of Louisville now stands, he cleared a field in the forest, not far from a stockade erected by other settlers, and built a cabin. A schoolmaster of that time remem-

bers boarding in a similar cabin, which had but one room sixteen feet square, where lived a father, mother, ten children, three dogs, and two cats. It was so cold at night that he slept on his shoes in order to prevent them from freezing too stiff to be worn the next day.

One morning in the year 1784 this first Abraham Lincoln started with his three sons, Mordecai, Josiah, and Thomas, to work at a little clearing near the cabin. Suddenly from a near-by thicket sounded the crack of a rifle, and this first Kentucky Lincoln fell back dead. Josiah ran to the stockade for help. Mordecai dashed back to the cabin and took down his father's rifle just as an Indian, in full war paint, reached Thomas, a little boy of six, who had stayed by his father's body. It was necessary to shoot quick and straight to save his brother's life. Aiming through a loophole at a white string of wampum on the Indian's breast, Mordecai dropped him dead while Thomas escaped into the cabin. From there Mordecai fought off the other Indians until help came from the stockade.

The sight of his father's death turned this oldest boy Mordecai into an Indian-hunter, and he spent his life in stalking and killing Indians wherever he could find them. Thomas, the father of Abraham Lincoln, grew up a

wandering laboring boy, with just enough education to write his name. Drifting from one job to another he became a carpenter and married Nancy Hanks, the niece of the man in whose shop he worked. The young couple went to housekeeping in a log cabin which had one room, one door, and one window, and was furnished with a spinning-wheel, a loom, and a feather bed.

There, in Hardin County, Kentucky, on February 12, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was born, and there he lived until he was seven years old. Lincoln's only playmate was his sister, and his playground the lonely forest. With this sister he went to school now and then under wandering school-teachers, who held school in a deserted cabin made of round logs with a dirt floor and small holes for windows covered with greased paper. There he learned his alphabet.

The War of 1812 was being fought at this time. "I had been fishing one day," he once told a friend in speaking about these times, "and had caught a little fish, which I was taking home. I met a soldier in the road and having been told at home that we must be good to the soldiers, I gave him my fish."

In April, 1816, Thomas Lincoln sold his farm for four hundred gallons of whiskey and twenty dollars, built a raft, and started down



and killed one of them. He has never since pulled trigger on any larger game."

The cabin had no window other than the large cracks which he mentions, nor any door to shut out the sleet and snow which drifted in through the doorway. The bare earth which served for a floor turned to mud during the winter thaws. The little boy's bed was a heap of loose leaves in a loft, which he reached by climbing up on pegs driven into the wall. Sometimes the family had nothing to eat but roast potatoes, and a neighbor remembers that peeled, sliced raw potatoes were passed around for dessert. Sometimes on cold days the children would carry a hot roast potato with them on their way to school to keep their hands warm. "They were pretty pinching times," wrote Abraham Lincoln in after years.

In 1818, when Abraham was nine years old, a mysterious disease nearly wiped out the small community at Little Pigeon Creek. It was called the "milk-sick" and attacked cattle and humans alike. Nancy Hanks Lincoln was stricken down with it. There was no doctor within thirty-five miles, and under the swift fever she died before one could be called. Her last message to her boy, as she lay dying, was to be good to his father and sister, and to love his kin and worship God. She was buried in a

rude coffin on a knoll near by, with no prayer or service over the grave. Months later the little boy learned to write, and his first letter, addressed to a wandering preacher, brought the latter to preach a funeral sermon over the lonely, snow-covered grave.

Before the next winter was over, the father went back to Kentucky and so successfully courted a widow, Sarah Bush Johnston, that they were married the morning after he called upon her. This second marriage was the beginning of a better life for the two little Lincoln children. The new mother had so much property that a four-horse team was needed to bring it all to Little Pigeon Creek; and for the first time in his life Abraham Lincoln slept on a feather bed, with a pillow and blankets and even a quilt. From her, too, he received his first woolen shirt, which took the place of the deerskin one that he had always worn before. The shiftless father was forced to make a door, lay a floor, and cut out a window, which was covered with greased paper instead of glass.

Sarah Bush Lincoln was an honest, energetic Christian woman, who learned to love Abraham quite as dearly as her own children. He owed much to her love and care. It was she who persuaded the father to let him go to school. The boy would walk nine miles a day

and do his studying at night in the light of a fire made from shavings, while his figuring was done with a bit of charcoal on the back of a wooden shovel, which he would whittle clean when it could hold no more. His pen was the quill of a turkey buzzard, and his ink was made from the juice of a brier-root. Altogether he had in his whole life less than a year of schooling, but he learned to read and spell and write and cipher to the rule of three.

One day a wagon broke down in the road near the house, and a woman with her two daughters stayed with the Lincolns over night. She had some books and told the children some stories. For the first time Abraham discovered what opportunity and happiness books can bring to those who learn to read them. From that day on he borrowed and read every book that he could get for miles around. One of the earliest writings which we have of his is a copy-book form which he set for a neighbor:

Good boys, who to their books apply,  
Will all be great men by and by.

There were six books which he read and read and reread. These books were the Bible, *Aesop's Fables*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *A History of the United States*, and Weems's *Life of Washington*. The last-

named book was damaged by the rain which drove in one night through the cracks in the cabin, and Lincoln had to pull fodder in the owner's cornfield for three whole days in order to pay for it. The book belonged to one "Blue-Nose" Crawford, and Lincoln afterward wrote a poem about him, making fun of his stinginess, —but he paid for the book. He kept on borrowing and reading until, as he later said, he had finished every book to be obtained within a radius of fifty miles.

There are not many records left of his boyhood. Those that have come down to us are all kindly ones. Once he saved the life of the village drunkard, whom he found freezing by the roadside, carrying him in his arms to the tavern and working over him until he was out of danger. Another time, it was remembered, he rescued a mud turtle from some children who were putting red-hot coals on its shell. The words of his stepmother can best sum up the story of his boyhood: "I can say that Abe never gave me a cross word or look, and never refused to do anything I asked him. I had a son, John, who was raised with Abe. Both were good boys, but I must say that Abe was the best boy I ever saw."

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAN

LINCOLN's starved and straitened boyhood stretched out into a manhood that seemed to hold little but poverty and toil. As he grew large enough he began to work out as a farmhand and afterward as a flatboatsman. Every yard of the brown jeans dyed with walnut juice which he wore was earned by splitting rails. A day's work lasted from sunrise to sunset and brought him in twenty-five cents. Listen to the story of Lincoln's first dollar:

I was about eighteen years of age and belonged, as you know, to what they call down South the "scrubs." I was very glad to have the chance of earning something, and supposed each of the men would give me a couple of bits. I sculled them out to the steamer. They got on board, and I lifted the trunks and put them on the deck. The steamer was about to put on steam again, when I called out, "You have forgotten to pay me." Each of them took from his pocket a silver half-dollar and threw it on the bottom of my boat. You may think it was a very little thing, and in these days it seems to me like a trifle, but it was a most important incident in my life. I could scarcely credit that I, a poor boy, had earned a dollar in less than a day; that by honest work I had earned a dollar. I was a more hopeful and thoughtful boy from that time.

It was on a trip to New Orleans on a flatboat with John Hanks that he saw, for the first time, men and women put up on a block and sold as

slaves. Lincoln turned to Hanks and said, "John, if I ever get a chance to hit this thing, . . . I'll hit it hard."

In 1831 he went to New Salem, on the Sangamon River, twenty miles northwest of Springfield. The town consisted of only fifteen houses all built of logs. Lincoln reached there on election day and the clerk of election needed a helper. Seeing Lincoln hanging around the polls he asked him whether he could write. "Well," said Lincoln, "I can make a few rabbit tracks."

He got the job and afterward was hired as a clerk in the village store. It was there that he laid the foundation of his reputation for absolute honesty. Finding one evening that he had taken six cents too much from a customer, he walked three miles that night, after the store was closed, to return the money. Another time, in weighing out half a pound of tea, he made a mistake of four ounces. Discovering this mistake the first thing in the morning, he closed the store until he could deliver the rest of the tea.

While he was still a clerk in this store the Black Hawk Indian War broke out. There was a call for volunteers and Abraham Lincoln was elected captain. The other candidate was a man named Kirkpatrick, who had once hired

Lincoln and cheated him out of two dollars in wages. Lincoln afterward wrote that no other success in life ever gave him so much satisfaction.

He did not make a great record as a military man. In after-life he used to tell how he got his men through a gateway into a field: "I could not for the life of me remember the right word of command for getting my company endwise, so that it could get through the gate; so when we came near I shouted, 'This company is dismissed for two minutes, when it will fall in again on the other side of the gate.' "

Lincoln did not win much glory in this campaign, but at some risk to himself he saved the life of a helpless old Indian whom his men wished to kill.

When he came back to New Salem, in partnership with a man named Berry he opened a store, giving his notes in payment for the stock. Berry ran the business heavily into debt and died. Instead of going through bankruptcy Lincoln sold out, shouldered the burden for fifteen years, and paid off every dollar of the debt with interest.

Later on he became the postmaster at New Salem. Most of the letters he carried around in his hat and delivered to his neighbors at their cabins on his way to work—one of the earliest systems on record of rural free-delivery.

At length came a chance to secure an appointment as deputy state surveyor. The only difficulty was that Lincoln knew absolutely nothing about surveying. He borrowed a textbook and, with the help of a schoolmaster friend, worked night and day for six weeks. At the end of that time, pale and haggard but a master of surveying, he got the job.

It was about this time that he fell in love with the beautiful Ann Rutledge, who died soon after they became engaged. "My heart is buried there," he said to a friend when they once passed her grave. There is no doubt that Lincoln was a changed man after her death and that her loss deepened his life. This thought has been nobly phrased by Edgar Lee Masters in the epitaph which he has written for her almost unmarked grave:

#### ANN RUTLEDGE

Out of me, unworthy and unknown,  
The vibrations of deathless music:  
"With malice toward none, with charity for all."  
Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions,  
And the beneficent face of a nation  
Shining with justice and truth.  
I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds,  
Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln,  
Wedded to him, not through union,  
But through separation.  
Bloom forever, O Republic,  
From the dust of my bosom!

In 1834 Lincoln was elected to the state

legislature and went to Springfield to live. He reached that town on a borrowed horse, with all of his possessions in a couple of saddlebags, and accepted the offer of Joshua Speed, a storekeeper, to share his room and bed until he got a start. Going upstairs Lincoln set his saddlebags on the floor and coming down said beamingly, "Well, Speed, I'm moved."

In 1842 Lincoln married Mary Todd, a spirited, pretty Kentucky girl. They lived at the Globe Tavern at four dollars a week. He wrote to a friend who had invited him to visit in Kentucky: "I am so poor, and make so little headway, that I drop back in a month of idleness as much as I would gain in a year's sowing."

Here is Lincoln's own account of his appearance at this time: "I am in height six feet four inches nearly, lean in flesh, weighing on an average of a hundred and eighty pounds, dark complexion, with coarse, black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollectec."

He always had unusual strength and endurance. Once he picked up and carried a weight of six hundred pounds. At another time he shouldered some posts which several men were vainly trying to lift with a hoisting machine. In harness he was able to lift a dead weight of half a ton off the ground. Moreover,

he was able to use this strength in protecting himself when it became necessary. At New Salem, when forced into a fight, he whipped Jack Armstrong, the leader of the Clary's Grove gang, and then with his back to the wall held his own against the rest of the gang, all of whom afterward became his devoted friends and supporters.

Throughout life Lincoln was a melancholy man. He thus wrote about himself in 1841 to his friend and partner Stuart: "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell; I awfully forebode I shall not."

He fought this natural despondency with his stories, when many another man would have given in to it. Of this use of stories Lincoln said:

I am not a story-teller. Often by the use of a story I can illustrate a point, or take the sting out of a refusal to grant a request. Sometimes, too, the telling of a good story or the listening to one lightens the load of sorrow and suffering that one in my position has to bear; but it is a mistake to think that I am a humorist or tell stories for the laugh that is in them.

Most of his stories come under this, his own description of them, as when, at one of the receptions given by him when President, a

Virginia farmer pushed his way through the crowd and told him that some Union soldiers had carried off his hay. "I hope, Mr. President," he ended, "that you'll see that I'm paid."

Mr. Lincoln's only reply was to tell him the story of Jack Chase, the river captain. Once when he was piloting a steamer through the rapids and straining every nerve and muscle to follow the narrow channel, a boy pulled his coat-tail and shouted in his ear above the roar of the waters: "Say, Mr. Captain, I wish you'd stop the boat a minute. I've dropped my apple overboard."

At other times his whimsical drollery and quaint flashes of humor were efforts, perhaps unconscious, to relieve the rooted melancholy of his life. "Why, Mr. President, do you black your own boots?" exclaimed Charles Sumner when he found Mr. Lincoln so engaged at the White House. "Whose boots did you think I blacked?" responded the President.

Another time, when he was visiting the Union army, a young officer pushed his way through the crowd and complained to him bitterly that Colonel Sherman, as he was then, had threatened to shoot him.

"Did he threaten to shoot you?" exclaimed Lincoln.

"Yes, shoot me!" the officer assured him earnestly.

Leaning over to him Lincoln said in a stage whisper, "Well, if I were you and Sherman had threatened to shoot me, I wouldn't trust him for a moment—for I believe he'd do it."

Early in life Lincoln resolved not to weigh himself down with bad habits. He led a straight, clean life morally. What he said about the women of America at the end of the Civil War can be quoted as his attitude toward women during his entire life:

"If all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of women were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war. I will close by saying, 'God bless the women of America.' "

He neither drank nor smoked. In the early forties he wrote to George E. Pickett, afterward a Confederate general:

"I have just told the folks here in Springfield, on the hundred-and-tenth anniversary of Washington's birthday, that the one victory we can ever call complete will be that one which proclaims that there is not one slave nor one drunkard on the face of God's green earth. Recruit for this victory!"

The picture of his inner life is a harder one

to draw than that of his appearance and habits. There were two men in Lincoln. One of them was the Lincoln known to all his townsfolk—the plain, honest, shrewd, kindly, humorous man, with a certain native dignity which kept them from calling him by his first name. “He was folky but not familiar,” one of them afterward wrote. The other man was the dreamer, who made his dreams come true; the mystic, who dreamed of the swift ship carrying him to a dark shore before the battles of Antietam, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and the night before his death; the thinker, who walked the streets wrapped in solitude, not seeing his best friends, but looking beyond the horizon and pondering in his own mind through many a lonely night the great problem of slavery. It was this Lincoln whom few even of his best friends knew. To the day of his death some of them persisted in believing that his greatness was an accident or a miracle. Lincoln’s own words throw light on what were the guiding motives of his inner life:

The better part of one’s life consists of our friendships,

he wrote to Judge Gillespie.

I would have the whole human race your friend and mine,

he said to his little son “Tad.”

If any man cease to attack me I never remember his past against him,

he declared in one of his speeches.

Stand with anybody that stands right, and part with him when he goes wrong,

he said to men who esteem their party more than they do their principles.

The advice of a father to his son, "Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, bear it that the opposed may beware of thee," is good, but not the best. Quarrel not at all. No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare time for personal contention. Still less can he afford to take all the consequences, including the vitiating of his temper and the loss of self-control. Yield larger things to which you can show no more than equal right; yield lesser ones, though clearly your own. Better give your path to a dog than be bitten by him in contesting the right. Even killing the dog would not cure the bite.

So he wrote, and so he lived.

He trained himself into a habit of sympathy. No man with whom he talked even for a few moments but felt that Lincoln was genuinely interested in him. Men trusted him for that, and because they saw by his everyday life that his sympathy was not put on but real. We like to read of the time in Springfield when he found a child sobbing on the porch of her home. She was to take her first railroad trip. The family had gone on and the hackman had forgotten to call for her trunk. There was no

time to get him before the train went. Lincoln shouldered the trunk and carried it on his back down to the station, arriving just in time to catch the train. This habit of kindness never left him all his life through. He was merciful in the merciless days of the Civil War. He pardoned men condemned for cowardice in battle. "If God Almighty gives a man a cowardly pair of legs," he said, "how can he help running away?"

He allowed no boys of eighteen to be shot for desertion. Once when a man was condemned to death for sleeping at his post he drove ten miles in the middle of the night to make sure that his telegram pardoning him had been received. On the very day of his death he said at a Cabinet meeting, when the treatment of the Confederate leaders was under discussion: "Enough lives have been sacrificed. We must extinguish our resentments."

Thirty-six hours after the fall of Richmond Lincoln visited the place and sought out the home of General Pickett, who had made the great charge at Gettysburg. Lincoln had known him as a boy. He found the house and knocked at the door. "Is this where George Pickett lives?" he asked a woman who came to answer the door with a baby in her arms. She said that it was and that she was Mrs.

Pickett. "I am Abraham Lincoln, George's old friend," he said. Then he took the baby in his arms and told Mrs. Pickett that everything would be done to make her comfortable and her home safe.

It is this simplicity and kindness which companions Lincoln forever in our thoughts with the gentle and heroic of older lands, so that of him John Bright, the English statesman, wrote: "In him I have observed a singular resolution honestly to do his duty, a great courage, a great gentleness under the most desperate provocations, and a pity and mercifulness to his enemies. His simplicity did much to hide his greatness."

## CHAPTER III

### THE LAWYER

A MAN stands revealed by his work. For twenty-three years Abraham Lincoln practiced law and sowed the harvest which the nation reaped in his presidency.

He was admitted to the bar in 1836, and his bar examinations consisted simply of an inquiry into his moral character. In those frontier days judges and lawyers depended more on common-sense than on common-law, and most of the courthouses were log cabins. A contemporary of Lincoln remembered that when Judge John Reynolds sat in the Circuit Court of Washington County, the sheriff opened court by coming to the door of the one-room log-built courthouse and shouting to the crowd outside: "Come in, boys; our John is a-goin' to hold court."

Another sheriff used to announce the opening of court as follows: "Oh yes! Oh yes! Oh yes! The Honorable Judge is now opened!"

One of the judges of Lincoln's time once restored order in his court by leaving the bench and thrashing the offenders, remarking as he resumed his seat: "I don't know what power

the law gives me to keep order in this court, but I know very well the power God Almighty has given me."

Another one of Lincoln's contemporaries tells of a trial which he attended, when the sheriff burst into the courtroom, out of breath, and announced to the judge that he had six jurors tied up and that his deputies were running down the others. Evidently, jury duty was no more popular in Lincoln's day than it is at present.

It was in such surroundings that Abraham Lincoln began the practice of law. His legal training dated back to the day when he bought an old barrel for his store for fifty cents, and discovered under some rubbish in the bottom a complete set of Blackstone's *Commentaries*. He afterward said that was the best stroke of business he ever did as a storekeeper.

Some of the happiest years of Lincoln's life were spent in walking or riding the circuit, which embraced more than a dozen counties and was one hundred and fifty miles broad. Once before he was able to afford a horse he was trudging along a frozen road toward a county-seat, when he was overtaken by a man in a wagon.

"Would you mind carrying my overcoat to town for me?" inquired Lincoln, stopping him.

"Certainly," said the other, "but how will you get it again?"

"Easy enough," replied Lincoln; "I'll stay inside of it!"

Lincoln always had trouble in getting a bed that was long enough for him. Once when traveling by steamboat he found his usual difficulty with his berth. During the day while Lincoln was on deck the captain had it lengthened and widened. The next morning Lincoln came to breakfast much puzzled and said solemnly that a great miracle had happened. During the night he had shrunk at least a foot in length and over six inches in breadth!

At the taverns the judge and lawyers sat at one end of the table, while the witnesses and prisoners, with the ordinary guests, sat at the other. Lincoln, however, was often found at the wrong end of the table among the common folks. Once Judge Davis, who ruled the whole bar with a rod of iron, tried to call Lincoln back to his end of the table.

"Come up here where you belong, Lincoln," he shouted.

"Got anything better to eat at *your* end, Judge?" drawled Lincoln, remaining where he was.

He soon became one of the best known and best liked men throughout this great expanse

of country. In his hand he usually carried a queer, old carpet-bag. Although he was always careless about his clothes he kept himself scrupulously clean, and had learned that a man who shaves every day will go much farther than one who does not. Sometimes his appearance was against him, as when he was sent by his first partner, Major Stuart, to try a case in an adjoining county for one Baddeley, an Englishman. The latter, who was accustomed to the bewigged, powdered, and gowned advocates of his home-country, was disgusted to find that he was to be represented by a tall, awkward young man whose trousers were as much too short as his coat was too large. Baddeley immediately sent him back to Stuart and retained someone else. He lived, however, to become one of Lincoln's most enthusiastic admirers.

In 1850 Lincoln in a lecture to young lawyers made some suggestions which are worth repeating:

The leading rule for a lawyer, as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today. Never let your correspondence fall behind. . . . Extemporaneous speaking should be practiced and cultivated. It is the lawyer's avenue to the public. However able and faithful he may be in other respects, people are slow to bring him business if he cannot make a speech. And yet there is not a more fatal error to young lawyers than relying too much on speech-making. If anyone, upon his rare

powers of speaking, shall claim an exemption from the drudgery of the law, his case is a failure in advance.

Lincoln brought into the practice of his profession the same charity and kindness that he had shown as a laborer, a storekeeper, and a surveyor. A young lawyer tells about arguing his first case in Chicago and making a failure of it. After he had sat down in despair a complete stranger to him came forward from the back of the room and stated that, as a member of the bar, he claimed the privilege of helping a young man who was evidently embarrassed. In spite of the protests of the lawyers on the other side, the court allowed him to do this, and he delivered a short, concise summing-up of the case which won it for the novice. The latter afterward found out that the stranger was Abraham Lincoln from Springfield.

Lincoln also had the rare faculty of trying a case without insulting or quarreling with his opponent. During all the years of his practice he never made an enemy of another lawyer.

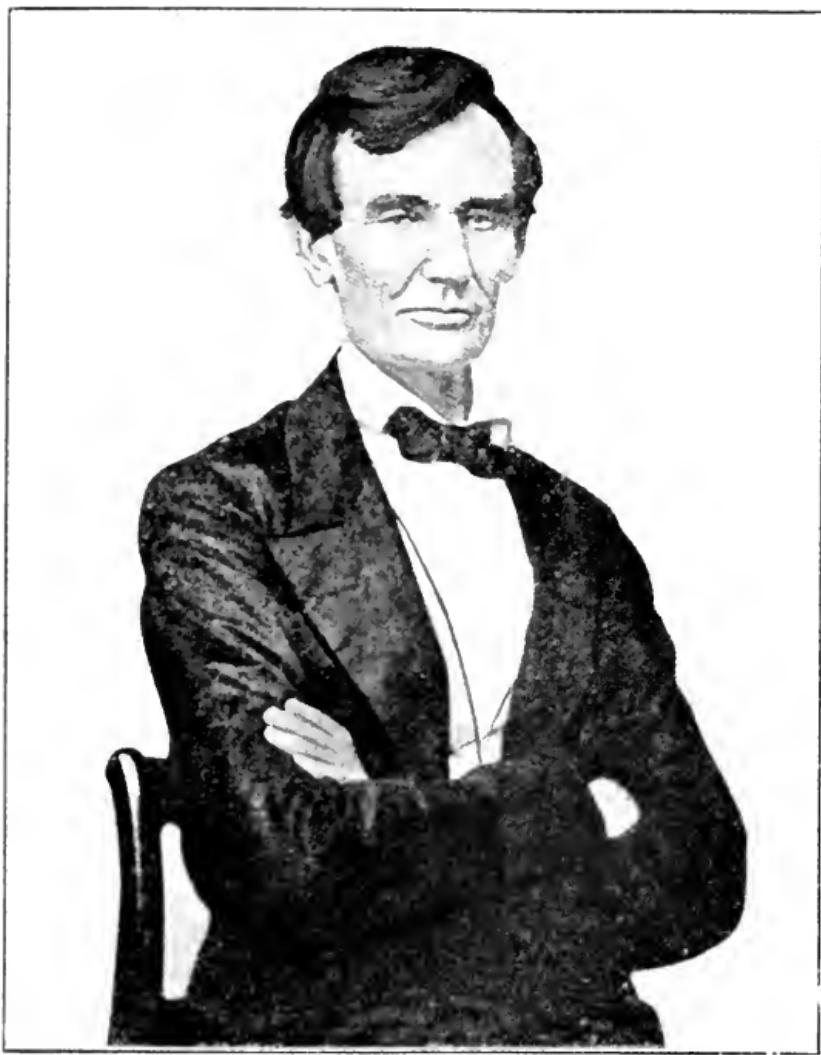
The honesty of Lincoln's character was always evident in his practice. Once Herndon, his young partner, had drawn up a dilatory plea which would throw a case over at least one term of court. "Is this founded on fact?" demanded Lincoln. Herndon admitted that it was not, but urged that it would save the

interests of their clients if the delay was obtained. "You know it is a sham," replied Lincoln, "and a sham is very often another name for a lie. Don't let it go on record. The cursed thing may come staring us in the face long after this suit has been forgotten."

Such scrupulous honesty Lincoln carried through all his practice. It gave him a standing and a reputation which were worth more to him than fine gold. He never made the mistake that young lawyers sometimes make of sacrificing a reputation for honesty for the sake of winning a case. Moreover, unless he had confidence in a case he would not take it.

Once when it was shown that his client had been guilty of fraud he walked out of the court-room and refused to continue the trial. The judge sent a messenger, directing him to return, but he positively declined. "Tell the judge that my hands are dirty, and that I have gone away to wash them," was the answer that he sent back.

"Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal winner is often a real loser—in fees, expenses, and waste of time. As a peacemaker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough." So



LINCOLN IN EARLY MANHOOD.



Lincoln lectured, and no man at the bar ever carried out this advice more conscientiously. Once he was asked to collect a claim of two and a half dollars and his client insisted, against Lincoln's advice, that suit be brought. Lincoln thereupon gravely demanded ten dollars as a retainer. Half of this he gave to the defendant, who then confessed judgment and paid the two and a half. By this method he satisfied both parties.

"Yes, there is no reasonable doubt that I can gain your case for you," he said to another client, who had stated a case which Lincoln thought an objectionable one. "I can set a whole neighborhood at loggerheads; I can distress a widowed mother and her six fatherless children and thereby get for you six hundred dollars, which rightfully belongs, it appears to me, as much to them as to you. I shall not take your case, but I will give you a little advice for nothing. You seem a sprightly, energetic man. I would advise you to try your hand at making six hundred dollars in some other way."

The lawyer, however, who under-estimated Lincoln at a trial soon found that he had made a fatal mistake. Underneath Lincoln's honesty, frankness, and fairness was a consummate mastery of tactics, an intimate knowledge of

human nature, and a broad grasp of legal principles, which finally made him the leader of the Illinois bar. "A stranger going into a court when he was trying a case would after a few minutes find himself instinctively on Lincoln's side and wishing him success." This was the way his methods impressed an associate.

Lincoln's mildness and good humor were habitual, but woe be to him who relied on those qualities to take a wrongful advantage of his client. In a murder case in which he represented the defendant, the judge unexpectedly made a ruling which was contrary to the decisions of the Supreme Court and was most injurious to Lincoln's client. A spectator described what follows: "Lincoln rose to his feet as quick as thought and was the most unearthly looking man imaginable. He roared like a lion roused from his lair and he said and did more things in ten minutes than he ordinarily said and did in an hour."

Perhaps the real secret of his success at the bar can best be summed up by the statement of E. M. Prince, who had seen him try over a hundred cases of all kinds:

Mr. Lincoln had a genius for seeing the real point in a case at once and aiming steadily at it from the beginning of a trial to the end. The issue in most cases lies in very narrow compass, and the really great lawyer disregards everything not directly tending to that issue.

The mediocre advocate is apt to miss the crucial point in his case and is easily diverted by minor matters. Mr. Lincoln instinctively saw the kernel of every case at the outset, never lost sight of it, and never let it escape the jury.

Often he clinched his point with some anecdote which so riveted it in the minds of the jury that it could not be dislodged by any amount of eloquence from his opponent. There was the case where he appeared for a defendant who was charged with assault and battery. It was proved that the plaintiff, who had been seriously injured, had made the first attack, but his lawyer argued that the defendant should not have defended himself so forcefully.

"That reminds me of the man who was attacked by a farmer's dog, which he killed with a pitchfork," commented Lincoln. "'What made you kill my dog?' demanded the farmer. 'What made him try to bite me?' said the other. 'But why didn't you go at him with the other end of your pitchfork?' persisted the farmer. 'Well, why didn't he come at me with *his* other end?' was the retort."

Another time Lincoln disposed of the contention that custom makes law with this anecdote:

Old Squire Bagley from Menard once came to my office and said, "Lincoln, I want your advice as a lawyer. Has a man what's been elected a justice of the peace a right to issue a marriage license?" I told him he had not. "Lincoln, I thought you was a law-

yer," he retorted. "Bob Thomas and me had a bet on this thing and we agreed to let you decide it; but if that is your opinion, I don't want it, for I know a blame sight better. I've been squire now eight years, and I've done it all the time!"

The case of Duff Armstrong, who was accused of murder, well shows Lincoln as a man and as a lawyer. Duff was the son of Jack Armstrong, the leader of the Clary Grove gang, whom Lincoln had once whipped in a fight when he was working as a clerk at New Salem. Afterward Jack and he had become firm friends. Duff and two others named Norris and Metzker had been drinking and there had been a free fight. Metzker had been struck over the head with a club by Norris and had received other injuries. Norris had already been convicted of manslaughter and the case looked bad for Duff Armstrong, who claimed that although he had struck Metzker with his fist he had not been guilty of the injuries which had caused the former's death.

Jack Armstrong by this time had died, and his widow appealed to Lincoln. He was in the middle of a political campaign, but he dropped everything to help the son of his old friend. At the trial a witness by the name of Allen took the stand and swore that he had actually seen Duff strike Metzker a blow with a blackjack. On cross-examination Lincoln brought out the

fact that the fight had occurred at about eleven o'clock at night, away from any house or light. Then he asked the witness how he had been able to see the occurrence so plainly. "By the moonlight," answered the witness.

Under further cross-examination Lincoln had Allen locate the position of the moon and testify that it was about full. Lincoln asked him no further questions and scarcely cross-examined the other witnesses, none of whom had actually seen the fight. Under the law of Illinois at that time the defendant was not permitted to take the stand himself. As Lincoln allowed witness after witness to testify, with scarcely a word of cross-examination, all the spectators in the courtroom felt that the case against Armstrong was hopeless. This feeling became a certainty when Lincoln announced that he would call no witnesses, and had only one exhibit to offer in evidence. This exhibit, however, turned out to be an almanac which showed that the moon was only in its first quarter and nearly set. Making but one point—the complete discrediting of the only eyewitness—Lincoln summed up to the jury and acquitted his client.

There can be no better ending to an account of Lincoln's life as a lawyer than the advice which he once gave to young lawyers:

## 44 ABRAHAM LINCOLN: HIS STORY

Let no young man choosing the law for a calling yield to the popular belief that a lawyer cannot be an honest man. If in your judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer resolve to be honest without being a lawyer. Choose some other occupation.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SPEAKER

IT was Abraham Lincoln's speaking which made him the President of the United States. His first speech when he was twenty-three years old raised him out of the ranks of day-laborers in his tiny town. Later his speeches sent him to the state legislature, to Congress, and to the White House, and pointed out the path which this nation followed and is still following, although Lincoln has been in his grave for more than half a century.

How did he do it? How did this awkward, poor, uneducated man, with a bad speaking voice which often broke, make himself the greatest orator of his day? How did he deliver the Gettysburg Address, "which will live until languages are dead and lips are dust"? His methods are plain and simple. Every boy and every man, by following them, can make himself a speaker, and add to his influence with men. Here are some of Lincoln's rules for oratory:

Don't shoot too high. Aim low and the common people will understand you. They are the ones you want to reach—at least they are the ones you *ought* to reach. The educated and refined people will under-

stand you, anyway. If you aim too high your ideas will go over the heads of the masses and only hit those who need no hitting.

As a lawyer he never used a word that the dullest juryman could not understand. He followed the same method as a speaker. At Yale University the writer studied elocution under Prof. Mark Bailey, who had taught his father before him. Prof. Bailey first heard Lincoln speak when he was stumping New England for Fremont. He was so impressed with Lincoln's power that he followed him from town to town to hear him.

Finally he succeeded in having a talk with him and asked him to explain his success as a speaker. "Well, all I know," said Lincoln, "is that when neighbors would come to my father's house and talk to father in language I did not understand, I would become offended sometimes and I would find myself going to bed that night unable to sleep. I bounded it on the north, south, east, and west until I had caught the idea, and then I said it to myself and when I said it, I used the language I would use when talking to the boys on the street."

That was one of the secrets of Lincoln's oratory—the use of the small word. He never used a big word when a little one would do. His sentences were usually short and he spoke not



BARNARD'S STATUE OF LINCOLN.



to be heard but to be understood. More than fifty per cent. of the words used in his great speeches are words of one syllable. He would say, "I dug a ditch," instead of, "I excavated a channel"; "I lost out by bad luck," instead of, "I was defeated by a fortuitous combination of circumstances." It is for this reason that he is quoted more than any other American except Franklin, another master of short sentences.

In the Gettysburg Address, the greatest short speech in the English language, he used two hundred and seventy-one words. Of these exactly two hundred are words of one syllable, or almost seventy-four per cent. There are whole lines of short words, such as: "That these dead shall not have died in vain." This use of the short word gives his sentences a force like the impact of a bullet.

Again, Lincoln was a master in the use of Anglo-Saxon. We are not a Latin race and the speaker or the writer who can use language from our Saxon and Viking forebears will always most strongly appeal to us. Examine some of Lincoln's best sentences, such as:

The father of waters again goes unvexed to the sea.

That this government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

As sure as God reigns and school-children read, that black, foul lie can never be consecrated into God's hallowed truth.

There is hardly a word from the Latin or the Greek in them.

The use of quaint, homely similes and illustrations was another of Lincoln's methods. When the mayor of New York, in the panic and bewilderment which followed the breaking out of the Civil War, proposed that New York City be taken out of the Union and made a free city—another Hamburg—Lincoln disposed of the plan in one sentence:

It will be some time before the front door sets up housekeeping on its own account.

When his plan of reconstruction was objected to as not elaborate enough, Lincoln defended it with an illustration:

Admit that my policy is in the beginning to what the final policy will be in the end as an egg is to the chicken. Don't you think that you will get the chicken quicker by hatching the egg than by smashing it?

His speeches were full of homely epigrams which needed only to be heard to be admitted, and which stuck forever in his hearers' memories:

God must have loved the common people, for he made so many of them.

You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

Anything that argues me into social and political equality with the negro is but a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, as if a man could prove a horse-chestnut to be a chestnut horse.

Again he would crystallize his whole argument into a single sentence:

Among free men there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet.

We must not promise what we ought not, lest we be called upon to perform what we cannot.

We will say to the Southern disunionist, "We won't go out of the Union and you shan't!"

I protest against the counterfeit logic which concludes that because I do not want a black woman for a slave, I must necessarily want her for a wife.

On the platform as in court Lincoln could retort severely if the occasion demanded it. When only twenty-six years of age he was once bitterly attacked at a political meeting by a sarcastic speaker of great local reputation, who had changed his politics and by so doing had been appointed Register of the Land Office. Moreover, he had the distinction of owning the only lightning-rod in the county. When Lincoln came to reply he said:

I am young in years but younger in the tricks and trade of a politician. Live long or die young, however, I would rather die now than like the last speaker change my politics in order to receive three thousand a year and then have to erect a lightning-rod over my house to protect my guilty conscience from an offended God.

Like Franklin, Lincoln possessed in an extraordinary degree the power of persuasion. Can anything be more appealing, more frank, more void of offense, than his appeal to the South in his First Inaugural Address?

Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws can among friends? . . . I am loath to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearth-stone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Like Franklin, too, Lincoln possessed the tact of a true statesman. The night of Lee's surrender at Appomattox there was a wild time in Washington. A band serenaded the President, playing various patriotic airs, such as "Columbia" and "The Star-Spangled Banner." When Lincoln was called upon to speak he turned to the bandmaster and said: "Play 'Dixie' now. It's ours again."

Another secret of Abraham Lincoln's strength as a speaker was the fact that he had saturated his mind with the two great masterpieces of English literature, the King James' Version of the Bible and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Lincoln read and reread, again and again, both

of these books until they became for him a storehouse to which he turned unconsciously for words, and phrases, and ideas. A part of his great speech in 1857 on the Dred Scott Decision of the Supreme Court, which, in effect, took away the last rights of the negro, might have been written by Bunyan:

All the powers of earth seem rapidly combining against the black man. Mammon is after him; ambition follows, philosophy follows, and the theology of the day is fast joining in the cry. They have him in the prison house; they have searched his person and left no prying instrument with him. One after another they have closed the heavy iron doors upon him; and now they have him, as it were, bolted in with a lock of a hundred keys, which cannot be unlocked without the concurrence of every key; the keys in the hands of a hundred different men, and they scattered to a hundred different places; and they stand, musing as to what invention in all the dominions of mind and matter can be produced to make the impossibility of escape more complete than it is.

Who but one nourished on the imagery of the Bible could have spoken as Lincoln did in his first reply to Senator Douglas in 1854?

These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon, and whosoever holds to the one must despise the other. . . . Our Republican robe is soiled and trailed in the dust. Let us purify it. Let us turn and wash it white in the spirit if not the blood of the Revolution.

Last and first and all the time Lincoln's power lay in the fact that he always had some-

thing to say. He thought things out for himself, instead of accepting other men's conclusions. In 1856, at the first convention of the Republican party, he delivered a speech which cast such a spell over his audience that even the reporters forgot to take notes. For years it was known as the "Lost Speech." Finally in recent years a report of it was found. Across the years the echo of it thrills us today. Every young man should read Abraham Lincoln's speech of May 19, 1856, which created a great party and outlined principles that this country has made a part of itself.

It was on November 19, 1863, that Lincoln reached his full height as an orator. The national cemetery at Gettysburg was to be dedicated. Edward Everett had spoken for two hours, furbishing up old ideas and redressing old thoughts with wonderful rhetoric and eloquence. Then Lincoln spoke for five minutes. Today no one remembers a sentence, a line, or an idea from Everett's speech. Read what Lincoln said, and note how every sentence rings true and familiar, like some oft-heard chapter of the Bible:

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation

so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow, this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STATESMAN

IT has been well said that the difference between a politician and a statesman is that a politician tries to make the people do something for him, while a statesman tries to do something for the people. Applying this test Abraham Lincoln was always a statesman. In his first speech in 1832, when he was only twenty-three years old, he declared:

Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not I can say for one that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow-men by rendering myself worthy of their esteem.

It was the recognition that he was really trying to serve them and not himself which gave him the confidence of the people. Moreover, he had the same trust in the people that they had in him.

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? . . . Is there any better or equal hope in the world?

he asked in one of his speeches.

Honesty was the policy on which he founded his public life. In 1834, when he was first elected to the Illinois legislature, his friends

raised a fund of two hundred dollars for his election expenses. After the campaign was over he returned to them \$199.25 of this fund. In 1836 he first showed in public life that moral courage which was to carry him so far. A bill was introduced to move the capital of Illinois to Springfield, which was Lincoln's home and where he and all his constituents wished the capital to be. Another measure, of which he did *not* approve, was joined as a rider to this bill, in the hope that it might be passed. Lincoln refused to vote for it. An all-night meeting was held and great pressure brought to bear upon him by prominent citizens from all over the state. Finally, after midnight, Lincoln rose amid profound silence and made an earnest speech, ending with this statement of one of the abiding principles of his political life:

You will never get me to support a measure which I believe to be wrong, although by so doing I may accomplish that which I believe to be right.

In 1837 he again had a chance to show his moral courage against odds. Incidentally he began to carry out the promise which he had made when he first saw slaves sold on the block. A few men had met together in Boston and, protesting against slavery, had pledged themselves to fight for its abolition. It seems strange

in these days, when all men are free as a matter of course, to read of the fire and fury that arose against the Abolitionists in both the North and the South. A mob of prominent citizens dragged William Lloyd Garrison, one of the first of the Abolitionists, through the streets of Boston with a halter around his body, while in Cincinnati the publication of an anti-slavery paper was stopped by the simple process of throwing the printing-press into the Ohio River, and in Illinois an editor was murdered.

When a resolution was offered in the legislature of Illinois, attacking abolition and defending slavery, Lincoln and one other man voted against it. Lincoln offered a counter-resolution that the institution of slavery was not only founded on injustice but was bad policy. At that time he announced another of his political principles:

The probability that we may fail in a worthy cause is not a sufficient justification for our refusing to support it.

In 1847 Lincoln was elected to Congress. His own estimate of himself and his life up to that time is contained in a few lines prepared for the Congressional Record, in contrast with the pages of biography so often inflicted on that publication. It ran as follows:

Born, February 12, 1809, in Hardin County, Ky.

Education, defective.

Profession, a lawyer.

Have been a captain of volunteers in Black Hawk War.

Postmaster in a very small office.

Four times a member of the Illinois legislature, and a member of the Lower House of Congress.

In Congress he voted against the iniquitous Mexican War, although his stand cost him a re-election. He wrote to Herndon, his partner:

Would you have voted what you felt and knew to be a lie? I know you would not. Would you have gone out of the House—skulked the vote? I expect not.

Lincoln returned to private life with his popularity shattered but with his conscience whole. Apparently his principles had mustered him out of public life forever.

Time went on. Stephen A. Douglas had brought about in Congress a repeal of the Missouri Compromise, which was an agreement that slavery should be kept out of all territory north of a certain parallel. Lincoln was riding circuit when the news of the repeal of this last safeguard against slavery was brought to him. A friend who occupied the same room with him that night told afterward how Lincoln spent the evening discussing the repeal and what it meant to the country. When this friend woke up in the morning he

saw Lincoln sitting just where he had left him the night before. As if the conversation had not been interrupted Lincoln said to him: "I tell you, this country cannot continue to exist half-slave and half-free."

That sentence became the keynote of his convictions. From that night he again entered politics. One of his friends was running for re-election to Congress. Lincoln began to speak for him and in all of his speeches he attacked the extension of slavery. Finally in 1858 he was nominated for the United States Senate, for the seat then occupied by Douglas. At a convention at Springfield he said:

I do not believe that this government can permanently endure half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

This thought aroused men like a firebell at midnight. There followed the great debate between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, rival candidates for the Senate. The prize was the presidency of the United States. The odds seemed overwhelmingly in favor of Douglas. He was wealthy, a senator, a trained debater with a magnificent voice, and the leader of the Democratic party. Lincoln was hardly known except as an able country lawyer. Douglas traveled in a special train, car-



PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND GENERAL McCLELLAN AT ANTIETAM,  
OCTOBER 2, 1862, SOON AFTER THE BATTLE.

*Photograph by Brady. From the collection of Frederick Hill Meserve, New York City.*



rying a cannon that announced his presence at each town where he spoke. Lincoln was likely to arrive shabby and haggard from an all-night ride in a day-coach. At first the rhetoric and eloquence of Douglas seemed to give him the advantage. Little by little Lincoln began to win a verdict from his audiences by the naked force of his arguments and his pitiless logic. Finally, Lincoln propounded to his opponent a question as unanswerable as the one that Christ asked the Pharisees. Which-ever way he answered it Douglas would inevitably lose the support of either the North or the South. Douglas tried to compromise. By so doing he won the race for the senatorship but lost the contest for the presidency later on.

"We accuse him for this," thundered Judah P. Benjamin, the most able of the Southern senators. "Under the stress of a local election his knees gave way, his whole person trembled. His adversary stood upon principle and was beaten; and lo, he is the candidate of a mighty party for the presidency of the United States. The senator from Illinois faltered. He got the prize for which he faltered, but the grand prize of his ambition today slips from his grasp because of his faltering in his former contest; and his success in the canvass for the Senate, purchased for an ignoble price, has cost him the loss of the presidency of the United States!"

There followed the convention and campaign of 1860, and the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency of the United States. Under

the responsibilities and discipline of that great office Lincoln reached his full stature as a statesman and grew into the heroic figure which has come down to us. Only a great man could have shown the magnanimity and forgetfulness of self which he showed to Seward, to Stanton, to McClellan, and to a host of others.

Lincoln called political and personal opponents to office. His only test was whether they could be of service to the country. Most of his Cabinet and even his generals regarded his election as an accident and himself as a country politician wholly unsuited to be President. McClellan, one of Lincoln's first generals, was a Democrat and had provided the special trains on which Douglas had traveled during his debates with Lincoln. When appointed a general McClellan disregarded Lincoln's orders and treated his chief in a way that but few men could have borne. At one time when Lincoln called at his house to see him on a critical matter, McClellan sent down word that he could not be disturbed and calmly went to bed, leaving the President of the United States to take himself home. Lincoln bore with him, however, until the very last, hoping against hope that he would finally learn to lead the armies of the Union to a victory. To one who urged him to discipline the general for his insolence, Lincoln

merely said: "I will stand outside and hold McClellan's horse for him if he will only bring us success."

Seward was called to become Secretary of State. He was the recognized leader of the Republican party, a candidate for the presidency, and in the Cabinet expected to be the power behind the throne. Compassionating what he supposed to be Lincoln's weakness, Seward actually wrote him a letter, proposing to take charge of the government and become acting-President. Lincoln refused this extraordinary suggestion, but with so much tact and kindness that he made Seward one of his warmest supporters and was able to avail himself of his great talents for the country's good. It was only a few weeks after this letter that the Secretary of State wrote to Mrs. Seward: "The President is the best of us all."

Throughout his presidency Lincoln refused to treasure up any personal injury and utilized even his enemies to help him save the country. He kept Chase as Secretary of the Treasury even when he knew that he was plotting to secure the nomination for the presidency.

Lincoln had first met Edwin M. Stanton when he had been retained with the latter in one of the most important cases of his legal career. "Where did that long-armed creature

come from, and what does he expect to do in this case?" demanded Stanton after they had met in Cincinnati, speaking so loudly as to be heard by Lincoln through an open door in the hotel. As a result of his contemptuous treatment of Lincoln, the latter was sidetracked and Stanton made the argument. After Lincoln had been elected President, Stanton, who had served in Buchanan's Cabinet, wrote and spoke of him with the utmost bitterness and disdain, referring to him in his letters as a "gorilla." Yet it was Stanton whom Lincoln called to be Secretary of War. Even after his appointment Stanton treated the President with marked disrespect. Once when Lincoln released some prisoners without regard to Stanton's wishes, the latter said that the only thing left to do was "to get rid of that baboon in the White House."

"I wouldn't endure that insult," said an indignant friend who reported the matter to the President. "Insult? That is no insult," returned Lincoln. "All he said was that I was a baboon, and that is only a matter of opinion, sir." Then he added after a pause, "The thing that concerns me most is that I find that Stanton is usually right." Yet Stanton lived to say at Lincoln's bier: "There lies the greatest leader of men the world has ever seen."

In the presidency, as outside, Lincoln was great enough to do the right thing even when the whole country was against him. When the commander of a Union vessel took the Confederate commissioners, Mason and Slidell, by force from a British steamer, the North made a hero of the officer. Lincoln realized instantly that this act was of the same class as those committed by Great Britain which brought on the War of 1812. In spite of the clamor of the whole country he restored the Confederate commissioners to Great Britain and disavowed their capture.

He who looks ever into the far future and seeks constantly to know the eternal purposes of life wins to a clearer vision than ordinary men. It was so with Abraham Lincoln. Listen to some of the messages that he has left for us of another generation:

No man is good enough to govern another person without that other's consent.

This is a world of compensation. He who would be no slave must be content to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it:

It is best for all to leave each man free to acquire property as fast as he can. I don't believe in a law to prevent a man from getting rich. It would do more harm than good. I want every man to have a chance to better his condition.

## 64 ABRAHAM LINCOLN : HIS STORY

Repeal the Missouri Compromise; repeal all the compromises; repeal the Declaration of Independence; repeal all past history—you still cannot repeal human nature.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHRISTIAN

LIKE Moses, Luther, and Washington, Lincoln became a great leader of men only when he surrendered himself to God. His mother, Nancy Hanks, was a Christian woman. Of her he said: "I remember her prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life."

As a boy he read his Bible and attended church when he could. In those days he learned the hymns which were his favorites throughout life, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" and "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood." During his early manhood he drifted into a temporary indifference toward religious matters. Yet even through this time he read and reread his Bible, and his later life showed what it did for him.

Take all of this book upon reason that you can and the balance on faith and you will live and die a happier man,

Lincoln wrote to a skeptical friend.

Another great war president of our own time has borne testimony about this Book of books, which Lincoln would have echoed in the last years of his life:

The Bible is the Word of life. I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves. Read, not little snatches here and there, but long passages that will really be the road to the heart of it. You will not only find it full of real men and women, but also of the things you have wondered about and been troubled about all your life, as men have been always; and the more you read the more it will become plain to you what things are worth while and what are not; what things make men happy—loyalty, right dealings, speaking the truth, readiness to give everything for what they think their duty, and, most of all, the wish that they may have the approval of the Christ, who gave everything for them; and the things that are guaranteed to make men unhappy—selfishness, cowardice, greed, and everything that is low and mean. When you have read the Bible you will know that it is the Word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own heart, your own happiness, and your own duty.

WOODROW WILSON.

Lincoln's period of indifference was followed by an awakening to higher things. In 1842 he wrote to his friend Speed a letter in which he said:

I believe God made me one of the instruments of bringing Fanny and you together, which union I have no doubt he had foreordained. Whatever he designs he will do for me yet. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" is my text just now.

More and more Lincoln's speeches became tinged with religious thought. In 1856 in the "Lost Speech" he said:

The stars in their courses, aye, an invisible power, greater than the puny efforts of men, will fight for us. . . . Our moderation and forbearance will stand us in good stead when, if ever, we must make an appeal to battle and to the God of hosts.



LINCOLN AND HIS SON "TAD."

*From photograph taken while Lincoln was President.*

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At last, preferred to all the great leaders of his party, he was made the President of his country. The sheer wonder of it made him know that he had been chosen of God for a great purpose.

I cannot but know what you all know that without a name, perhaps without a reason why I should have a name, there has fallen upon me a task such as did not rest even upon the father of his country; and so feeling I cannot but turn and look for that support without which it will be impossible for me to perform that great task. I turn, then, and look to the great American people and to that God who has never forsaken them.

His farewell to his friends at Springfield as he left to go to Washington shows as does nothing else the new spirit of his life. As with the friends of the Apostle Paul at Miletus, many of them "wept sore, . . . sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." To them he said:

My Friends: No one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether I may ever return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in him, who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To his care commanding you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

From that day a new life begins for him—the life of a devoted Christian. “I have been driven many times to my knees,” he later wrote, “because I had nowhere else to go.”

Again he declared:

I would be the veriest blockhead if I thought I could get through with a single day’s business without relying upon Him who doeth all things well.

This spirit shows constantly throughout all his duties. To a Missouri delegation he said:

I desire to so conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the very end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every friend on earth, I shall have at least one friend left—my conscience.

When a minister, representing a visiting delegation, said to him that he hoped the Lord was on their side, Mr. Lincoln replied:

I am more concerned to know whether we are on the Lord’s side.

Constantly he sought for the sympathy, and the prayers, and the help of all Christian people. A minister from a little village in central New York State called to tell him that every Christian father and mother was praying for him every day. The tears filled Lincoln’s eyes as he thanked his visitor and said:

But for these prayers I should have faltered and perhaps failed long ago. Tell every father and mother you know to keep on praying and I will keep on fighting.

After the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed he said to some men who had called to congratulate him on the success of the Union arms:

On many a defeated field there was a voice louder than the thundering of cannon. It was the voice of God crying, "Let my people go." We were all very slow in realizing that it was God's voice, but after many humiliating defeats the nation came to believe it as a great and solemn command. Great multitudes begged and prayed that I might answer God's voice by signing the Emancipation Proclamation, and I did it, believing that we should never be successful in the great struggle unless we obeyed the Lord's command. Since that the God of battles has been on our side.

Just before the Battle of Gettysburg all of the members of the Cabinet were in a state of terrible anxiety. General Lee with a powerful army had swept up into Pennsylvania. On the eve of the battle General Meade, almost an untried general, had been placed in command. A defeat meant the loss of the Capital and perhaps the occupation of Philadelphia and even New York. Everywhere was panic. Only Lincoln remained unmoved and unafraid. After the battle he told General Sickles the reason of his confidence:

In the pinch of your campaign up there, when everybody seemed panic-stricken and nobody could tell what was going to happen, I went to my room one day and locked the door and got down on my knees before Almighty God, and prayed for victory at Gettysburg. I told him that this was his war, and our cause his

cause, but that we could not stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. Then I made a vow to Almighty God that if he would stand by our boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by him, and he did stand by you boys and I will stand by him. And after that, I don't know how it was and I can't explain it, but soon a sweet comfort swept into my soul that God Almighty had taken the whole business into his own hands, and that is why I have no fears about you.

To Chittenden, the Register of the Treasury, Lincoln said:

That the Almighty does make use of human agencies, and directly intervenes in human affairs, is one of the plainest statements in the Bible. I have had so many evidences of his direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have not sufficient facts upon which to found it. I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing, he finds a way of letting me know it.

It was this deep and achieved faith in God that made John Hay, who had been one of his private secretaries, say of him:

Abraham Lincoln, one of the mightiest masters of statecraft that history has known, was also one of the most devoted and faithful servants of Almighty God who have ever sat in the high places of the world.

Only a Christian could have written the letter which he sent to a Mrs. Bixby, who had lost five sons in the service. It is copied in letters of gold on the walls of a great English university:

DEAR MADAM:

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Time went on. The war was drawing to its close. On the day of the receipt of the news of Lee's surrender the President held a meeting of the Cabinet. Neither Lincoln nor any member was able for a time to speak. Finally, at the suggestion of the President, all dropped on their knees and thanked God in silence and in tears for the victory that he had granted to the Union. It is doubtful whether there is any other recorded instance where the meeting of the Cabinet of a great country ended in prayer.

The victories of the Union arms re-elected Lincoln as President. In his Second Inaugural Address he reached heights not achieved before, when looking back over four years of war, hatred, and calumny he was yet able to say:

The Almighty has his own purposes. If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which in the providence of God must needs come, but which, having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled up by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are now in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

In his last public speech of April 11, 1865, Lincoln again testified to his faith and trust in God. He said in part:

We meet this evening, not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Richmond and Petersburg, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army, give the hope of a just and speedy peace, the joyous expression of which cannot be restrained. In all this joy, however, He from whom all blessings flow must not be forgotten.

Three nights later in the state box at Ford's Theatre he was talking to Mrs. Lincoln about

a trip to the Holy Land. Just as he was saying that there was no city which he so much wished to see as Jerusalem, his words were cut short by the fatal bullet. On the morning of April 15, 1865, he who had wept often but who had never flinched nor faltered, went, not without abundant entrance, into the presence of his Lord. Edwin M. Stanton, the Secretary of War and his onetime enemy, broke the silence of the death-chamber and said:

Now he belongs to the ages.

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